

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 003268

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MAY 21 MEETING WITH TURKISH PRIME MINISTER RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

[¶](#)1. (U) Classified by: Economic and Political Counselor John Desrocher, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)2. (U) May 21, 2006; 9:30AM; Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

[¶](#)3. (U) Participants:

U.S.

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The Deputy Secretary  
NEA DAS Scott Carpenter  
D Executive Assistant Mike Matera  
D Senior Advisor Rich Mills  
D Special Assistant Christine Davies  
Embassy Cairo Kevin Roland (notetaker)

Turkey

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Prime Minister Erdogan  
Economic Minister Ali Babajan  
Prime Minister's Staff

[¶](#)4. (C) Summary: The Deputy Secretary met with Turkish PM Erdogan Sunday, May 21, on the margins of the World Economic Forum in Sharm el Sheikh Egypt. The Deputy Secretary and PM Erdogan discussed Iraq, Sudan/Darfur, Iran, economic developments in Turkey, and EU accession talks. End Summary.

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Iraq

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[¶](#)5. (C) Erdogan said Turkey takes pride in the recent announcement of the formation of the Iraqi government, and expects to invite PM Maliki to Turkey soon to discuss bilateral issues and ways in which Turkey can be helpful in improving Iraq's internal situation. Turkey is highly concerned about the maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity, Erdogan said, and he sees the threat of full-blown ethnic conflict, aimed at destroying that integrity, growing every day. This extends to the problem of the PKK, he said, which requires the commitment of, and close cooperation between, the U.S., Turkey, and the new Iraqi government. Erdogan sees an ethnic imbalance growing in Iraq, and cited the appointment of only one Turkoman (a Shiite) to a ministerial post as a sign of this trend. Also, he added, efforts to "modify the demographics" of Kirkuk pose a serious threat to Iraq's long-term internal security, and posited that Iraq's oil wealth should be of equal benefit to all of its citizens.

[¶](#)6. (C) Maintaining his focus on the "Kirkuk problem," Erdogan said that constitutional reforms efforts will be especially critical here. The government, he said, should not allow a demographic structure as that which is proposed, as "Kirkuk should belong to all Iraqis." "Take a deeper look into history," he said, "not just to what the Kurds say." He fears that tensions over the region's demographic make-up could flare-up in the pre-local-elections period.

[¶](#)7. (C) Regarding the Turkish-Iraqi border, Erdogan said that, in addition to creating a "soft belly" for terrorist attacks, having only a single border gate will make it impossible for Turkey to maintain its logistical support. He said his concerns over security problems at the gate have been raised before but no steps have been taken. Internal security of key political figures is also important, he added, and cited the murder of Tarek Hashimi's brother and son as an example of the threats under which public figures live.

[¶](#)8. (C) Erdogan said that Turkey will continue to do what it can to help the situation in Iraq, and noted police training and the Istanbul gathering of Sunnis as examples of its efforts. Erdogan also cited Turkey's role in ISAF in Afghanistan as the fruit of U.S.-Turkish cooperation and a declaration of the strategic partnership. Turkey has strong, fraternal relations with the Iraqi people, particularly in the north, he said, and needs to maintain these relations to form the basis of a peaceful region. Turkey will continue to support the three-pillar security mechanism, he added, and believes it should function well toward stabilizing the internal situation in Iraq.

**19.** (C) Thanking Erdogan for Turkey's efforts thus far in Darfur, the Deputy Secretary stressed that following the peace agreement we need to maintain momentum by pressing the Sudanese government and the rebels to implement the accord, step up food delivery, and bring together an effective UN peacekeeping force. Erdogan described how his trip to Darfur made a strong, personal impression upon him and his delegation. The horrific sights he witnessed in the Etosha Camp, in particular, prompted him to begin mobilizing support upon his return to Turkey in the forms of well drilling, camp rehabilitation, illumination, and the construction of a hospital and school. Turkey would pursue these projects in conjunction with the Turkish Red Crescent society and other foundations. He expressed his belief that the people of Darfur must not "lose hope."

**10.** (C) The Deputy Secretary highlighted that in this critical time for Darfur security conditions must be improved. Noting the professionalism of Turkey's military and its unique position of being both an Islamic state and member of NATO, the Deputy Secretary called for Turkey's participation in a UN peacekeeping force. The Prime Minister agreed to stay in close touch on this point, stating that he believed a strong, joint effort was required. He added that he has initiated action in the OIC, pressing for a SecGen visit to the region. Erdogan said he believed that the people of Darfur "must not grow accustomed" to their current predicament lest they become "tools for terror."

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Iran  
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**11.** (C) Responding to the Deputy Secretary's request for his views on Iran, Erdogan said Iran was "a very difficult problem," noted how any conflict would have major implications for Turkey, and said Turkey was "ready to help" in whatever way it could, including joining UK/German efforts at arriving at a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Noting Turkey's strong cultural and economic ties to Iran (including the purchase of USD 5 billion in natural gas), Erdogan said he had spoken directly with Ahmenejad at recent meetings in Baku and Bali. In both meetings Erdogan said he counseled the Iranian president that Iran must be fully transparent and exchange "provoking statements" for more diplomatic language. In discussing transparency vis a vis the Baradei report, Erdogan said Ahmenejad told him that Iran was being transparent. Erdogan said he told Ahmenejad that these concerns were international concerns and that it was the Iranians responsibility and obligation to overcome them.

**12.** (C) Responding to the Deputy Secretary's query about conditions inside Iran, Erdogan asserted that the latest developments inside Iran showed solidarity, not decomposition, in Iranian society, and that a dialogue exists between reformists and the regime. He also noted that Iran's unique "martyr culture," a culture that is shared by all Iranians, could not be underestimated, and external threats are causing this movement to gain ground in a way it has not since the revolution.

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Economic Developments in Turkey  
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**13.** (C) PM Erdogan described for the Deputy Secretary what he sees as Turkey's great economic achievements over the last three-and-a-half years: increased GDP per capita; plunging nominal interest rates; a shrinking budget deficit as a percentage of GDP, and sustained economic growth. While "unpleasant imbalances" remain with regard to trade, Erdogan said Turkey has begun to intensify its exports (USD 75 billion of a total trade volume of USD 185 billion). He also cited a leap in FDI volumes, now at USD 10 billion up from USD 1 billion, but noted the importance that EU accession negotiations have in this area and in achieving his goal of achieving USD 10,000 GDP per capita by 2012. Key growth opportunities exist in the financial services and property sectors, Erdogan said, and the Turkish government would continue to push anti-corruption efforts as it "withdraws from the economy" and assumes the role of regulator rather than active participant. The Deputy Secretary applauded Erdogan's efforts and noted that Economic Minister Babajan must be a very busy man.

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EU Negotiations  
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**14.** (C) In discussing the status of EU accession negotiations, Erdogan told the Deputy Secretary that Turkey

"would never forget" the support of the U.S., and said he will intensify efforts to accelerate talks. Erdogan described Turkey as being "on the verge" of completing the screening process, but has decided to halt efforts for the remainder of the Austrian presidency, seeking to push again once Finland has taken over next term. The Deputy Secretary said he recognized the challenges that lie ahead, but urged Erdogan to press forward; saying Turkish accession had implications well beyond economics. The Deputy Secretary reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to helping the Europeans recognize their broader strategic interest in Turkish membership.

¶15. (C) On Cyprus, Erdogan said the Turks and Northern Cypriots "did their best" and "kept their promises" with regard to the Annan plan, while the Greeks and Southern Cypriots did not. The Deputy Secretary said that the U.S. had urged the Southern Cypriots to support the Annan Plan. Erdogan, stating that the Northern Cypriots had been "punished," expressed his hope for greater U.S. connections with, and investment in, Northern Cyprus, and solicited an invitation for the Northern Cyprus President to visit the U.S. Erdogan mentioned there were positive developments in the Northern Cypriot tourism sector, among others, that would greatly benefit from U.S. involvement.

¶16. (U) This cable has been cleared by the Deputy Secretary's party.

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